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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KMCA](#) [EAID](#) [GA](#)

SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: MUTED REACTION SO FAR TO MCA
ELIGIBILITY SUSPENSION

REF: A. STATE 101248

[¶](#)B. BANJUL 386

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

GOTG'S MUTED REACTION

[¶](#)1. (C) In the aftermath of the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) June 16 decision to suspend The Gambia's eligibility for Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) assistance due to the GOTG's deteriorating performance on various eligibility criteria (refs a and b), the Gambian reaction has so far been muted. Our sense is that, with all levels of the GOTG fully occupied with arrangements for the June 25-July 2 AU Summit and related meetings, officials have simply been unable so far to focus on the MCA eligibility suspension. As reported ref b, Foreign Minister Lamin Kaba Bajo responded in subdued fashion when Ambassador presented him with MCC CEO Danilovich's letter advising of the suspension for delivery to President Jammeh. Although one source said, without elaborating, that Jammeh was "depressed" over the MCC's decision, the GOTG has maintained public silence over the matter, and we have been unable to get private reactions from officials -- again, due to their preoccupation with the Summit.

BUT WIDESPREAD PUBLIC AWARENESS

[¶](#)2. (C) Despite the GOTG's silence, our contacts indicate that there is widespread public awareness here -- and dismay -- over the suspension. While government-run media, including the national television and radio service, have ignored the story, a privately owned daily, "The Point," gave it front page coverage and also featured an editorial urging action by the GOTG to reverse the deterioration in performance on governance-related and economic policy criteria that resulted in the suspension. According to our sources, many Gambians are also aware of the MCC's press release announcing the decision as well as statements by foreign NGO's (e.g., Center to Protect Journalists, International Press Institute) endorsing the MCC's action.

COMMENT

[¶](#)3. (C) We believe that the MCA program remains an important source of leverage in our efforts to promote progress by the GOTG on human rights and democracy as well as the other areas covered by the MCA eligibility criteria. The upcoming visit here by AF DAS Thomas-Greenfield will provide an opportunity to raise the suspension face-to-face with Jammeh and urge action to reverse the negative trends in the GOTG's performance so as to lay the groundwork for seeking

reinstatement -- while making it clear that for any chance of reinstatement, it will be incumbent on the GOTG to demonstrate concrete, sustained progress in reversing those trends. Despite Jammeh's current preoccupation with the Summit, we regard it as essential to keep the pressure on him and his government to respond constructively to the suspension through improved performance. END COMMENT .

STAFFORD